

Grants, Grants and more Grants – where to begin?

Introducing:

Getting a Grip on Grants: A How-to Guide for Park and Recreation Providers

by Laura Westrup, Planning Division,
California Department of Parks and Recreation

It is abundantly clear, with the passage of recent park bond acts Californians want and need quality parks in their communities, their regions and throughout the state. Have you ever wanted to get grant money to meet the demand for high quality parks and recreation programs in your area?

Was your enthusiasm dimmed when you looked at the guidelines and thought them overwhelming? Did you submit what you thought was a fabulous proposal, but the funder disagreed? Perhaps a new how-to document on grantwriting recently released by the Department of Parks and Recreation will help.

“This guide will be an invaluable resource for administrators, educators, program planners and direct service providers. The manual helps to demystify the grant-writing process by providing explicit tools for how to negotiate this process and how to create an actual product - a grant proposal. Any park and recreation professional interested in getting money to support their agency, their program and/or their idea should get this manual.” Dr. Beth D. Kivel, Assistant Professor, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, California State University, Sacramento

The Planning Division's, Park and Recreation Technical Services (PARTS) unit released in December 2003 a 'how-to' guide on researching and preparing grant applications

targeted specifically to the park and recreation field. *Getting a Grip on Grants: A How-to Guide for Park and Recreation Providers* will help public agency park and recreation service providers with their challenge of balancing increasingly stretched budgets while providing high quality programs and safe, interesting, and well-maintained facilities. The guidebook will also be of value to non-profit support groups.

The guidebook, designed for all levels of grantwriters – from beginners to those who have advanced grant writing experience, provides practical tips on researching and preparing winning grant proposals. The ideal audience targeted by this guidebook is the park and recreation service provider who has strong programmatic or facility knowledge, but needs guidance on grantwriting fundamentals. The emphasis is on public agency grants, although an overview of foundation funding sources has been included.

As agency budgets become more constrained, grant dollars are aggressively being sought by larger numbers of competitors creating even more fierce competition for the billions of dollars awarded annually. Today, grantors can choose more specifically where they want to allocate funds and are more critical in evaluating grant proposals. If

you have strong programmatic or facility knowledge, but need guidance on grantwriting fundamentals, this book can help you convince a funder to select *your* proposal.

Grant funds have been regularly used to supplement agency budgets and provide funding for many programs and projects. Park and recreation professionals know that if their grant request is successful, the augmented funding can help provide a wide range of additional services and park amenities ranging from renovating play equipment surfaces, building boat launch facilities, and constructing trails to acquiring conservation easements, offering youth theater programs and providing senior outings. Grant funds may also be found for research and collaboration, capital improvements, educational, environmental, historical, cultural, and therapeutic programs. Increasingly, grants are used to provide funding for planning, project design, project administration, and program evaluation. The list is almost endless; however, grants typically do not fund routine maintenance or administrative overhead.

This guidebook can increase knowledge of the competitive grant process and how to locate and leverage funds for your organization's budget. Designed to augment the numerous existing resources for grantwriters, it outlines an easy to follow, systematic approach for organizing and presenting grant proposals, ultimately saving professionals precious time and energy. This document also provides information on using computer databases and websites, and provides helpful sample proposals, letters, budgets, and other narratives to help your grant request succeed..

The guidebook offers not only the insights of seasoned grant writers, but also a unique perspective from those who must select and award grants. For example, the guidebook asks the grantwriter to answer thought-provoking questions designed to help the agency save precious time and energy while developing the grant proposal. The guidebook also cites the top eight reasons why grant applications are not selected:

- The proposal had sections that were not complete or lacked supporting documentation. The applicant did not follow the guidelines provided by the funding agency.
- The project or program cited findings based on a shaky hypothesis or incomplete data. Statistical or demographic data were weak. In essence, the application lacked credibility.
- The problem was more complex than the proposer appeared to realize.
- The problem or project was not clearly defined or was weakly stated.
- The applicant did not have a strong enough track record to support the award.
- The project or program was not adequately or clearly explained.
- The project appeared too ambitious for the projected cost.

- There simply just was not enough money to go around.

The report is available on the Department of Parks and Recreation, Planning Division's web site at <http://www.parks.ca.gov>. For questions regarding the guidebook, please contact Laura Westrup at 916 651-8691 or at lwestr@parks.ca.gov.

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